

More About Those (crown)/B.T Perfins

by Tony Llewellyn-Edwards

Since John Nelson's thought provoking article in previous issues of this Bulletin I have been analysing the incidence of the so-called fakes of this perfin. My thanks to all who have allowed me to see their holdings or who have forwarded data.

We still do not have the answer, but I think I can clarify both ends of the story. Those designs we know as Die I and Die II were certainly Official Perfins used in London. Both these perfins now appear to have been produced by a multi-headed perfin machine. This has always been our understanding for Die I, but it is a new suggestion for Die II (which had been thought to have been a single die machine). Dick Mewhinney (of the US Perfin Club) allowed me to see his holdings of this perfin for analysis to increase the breadth of the statistical analysis. Amongst it I was amazed to find a vertical strip of ten KEVII ½d stamps all perfined with Die II. Measurement of the positions of the perfins on each stamp (which were found in exact alignment) suggests the whole strip was perfined at a single strike. Was this a full sheet perfin machine?

The perfin patterns on this strip are all identical, as are those on all the Die 1 multiples I have seen to date. This seems to preclude the idea that the variations in the perfins come from different dies in the same head. So we have two multiple head machines officially perfinning stamps for use in London and a number of other machines also used to perfin slightly different designs.

Some of the variant designs are certainly forgeries. I have seen some which are very poor copies and obviously manufactured by hand with a pin. I have a KEVII 2½d blue which is perfined with a Type I "Fake" design. It was perfined under an example of a 1d KEVII carmine and some of the holes on the former stamp are blocked with debris from the perfinning of the latter stamp. There is nothing strange in that, but the 1d stamp has been postmarked before it was perfined and the postmark is clearly visible under a glass on the debris stuck in the perfins of the 2½d stamp. Another stamp I would assign as a definite fake is a mint KEVII 2d issue perfined with Type 14 "Fake". This variant of the design is always found reversed. In my example close inspection of the gum on the

back of the stamp shows that it was perfinned from the front with a reversed die, not from the back with a normal die as is usually the case with reversed perfins. I hope many of you who were at the London Meeting were able to see the examples quoted above and make their own judgements.

From the above it is my conjecture that we have a group of definitely genuine examples and a group of certain fakes. Unfortunately we also have a large group between the two, which are difficult to place in either category with any certainty. These range from some very poor designs with very poorly engineered pins to some very well engineered perfins only suspect because of their slightly variant design or improbable dates. What can we say about these?

It is difficult to suggest that these are all fakes. I agree with John Nelson, that it would not be sensible to fake so many stamps which, as perfins, would not be particularly valuable or sort after. This is even more the case when I can report such stamps as SG 162 (Scott 95), SG 191 (Scott 102) and even a mint SG 188 (Scott 99) perfinned with "fake" designs. Who would have been foolish enough to destroy the value of stamps such as these by applying fake perfins?

The analysis of the postmarks has not helped much. All Die I and Die II seem to be postmarked in London, and the other designs seem to be postmarked all over the UK (including London and Ireland). There does not seem to be any consistency in the place of posting of any particular variant design which could have suggested that the variant machines were associated with provincial offices of the Board. If these were official perfins, what were they used for? If they were fake, why did anyone bother? You tell me.

We still need help in sorting out this problem. Perhaps the answer lies in your collection. I would be pleased to see any of this type of perfin (a photocopy of the back would be fine). However, I particularly want to know about any multiple pieces, any Die I or Die II postmarked outside London and any examples with postmarks having partial town names (or numbers) or with legible dates.